

# CONNECTING THE DOTS

Indiana Rural Development Council  
Newsletter



July 2005

## Anderson Named IRDC Executive Director



Phillip Anderson

I am thrilled to be serving as IRDC's Executive Director and have the opportunity to work with the IRDC Governing Board and Lt. Governor Becky Skillman, Indiana's first Secretary of Agriculture and Rural Development.

I come to the council after twenty years with agricultural producer organizations. During that time I worked for Indiana Corn Growers Association, Indiana Veal and American Veal and the last twelve years leading the Indiana Beef Cattle Association. I was raised on a grain and livestock farm near Frankfort, Indiana, that is still farmed by my family. My three siblings all still live in rural areas so we discuss the issues they face on many fronts.

This is an exciting time in the area of rural development. The state of Indiana has taken several steps to strengthen our efforts to create vibrant rural

communities. These efforts cannot be directed out of Indianapolis, but must draw upon the expertise, experience and desire of rural leaders to improve the quality of life for their citizens.

Through the efforts of Lieutenant Governor Skillman and the state legislature, Indiana now has an Office of Rural Affairs (ORA). Their commitment to rural communities has resulted in new staff, realignment of existing staff and new resources. We can create a dynamic partnership between IRDC, ORA and numerous rural partner organizations to better serve our state's rural communities.

Inside this issue, you can learn more about our new planning process. We will create a rural development framework to guide ORA, IRDC and their many partner groups

In the last several weeks, I have been a part of two events in which communities and organizations received grant money from the state to improve our quality of life. It is clear that people are willing to work and if we work together we can accomplish tasks that truly impact the lives of those we serve.

We are now developing our next IRDC Work Plan. In preparing the plan, we will be seeking ways in which we can partner with you and your organizations, institutions, businesses and agencies.

Partnerships are most effective if the partners' goals align so we are sending letters to numerous groups in the rural/community development network to learn more about their goals and objectives.

In the last several years of my time with Indiana Beef Cattle Association, we committed time and money to land use issues and economic development projects. We even included "building...stronger communities" into the association's vision and mission statements. There is a bright future for rural communities, but it will be a different future. It always has been.

The size of a community's spirit is not measured in dollars or population. We are poised to help progressive communities continue to thrive and revitalize those communities who need to be challenged to be all they can be. It can really be summed in four words----*Small Communities...Big Solutions.* ❖

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Lt. Governor  
Becky Skillman

Secretary of Agriculture and  
Rural Development

*Indiana's small cities, towns and rural counties are an important part of what makes Indiana great. I am committed to ensuring these areas have the tools needed to improve their economies and thrive in the 21st century and beyond.*

## Putting the *Development* into Rural Communities

# Projects serving rural areas to be bolstered by recent grant awards

By REBECCA WILSON

AgriNews Publications

INDIANAPOLIS -- With nearly 60 parties awarded funding through the most recent round of Rural Development Grants, Hoosiers all around the state will be distributing a \$6.2 million bounty to bring grass roots brainstorms to fruition.

Aside from Purdue University, which was granted \$433,539 for four separate projects, the Southern Indiana Rural Development Project, Inc. earned the largest grant in the pack with a \$300,000 award.

"We feel that we are very fortunate and appreciate the Rural Development Council's confidence," said Thayr Richey, a senior project manager with SIRD.

Richey said he hoped the grants, which were awarded for seven different projects proposed by SIRD, were in some part granted based on the track record his non-profit organization had established in the 12 years it had been in operation serving 39 southern Indiana counties.

SIRD's Rural Development Grant projects will include an investigation of "brain drain" in rural areas, entrepreneurial assistance, resource development, retaining experience of small manufacturers and promoting broadband Internet access in rural areas.

Grant funding went to support broadband access opportunities in other areas as well, including Charlestown, the Eastern Indiana Development District based in Union County and to the area served by the Southern Indiana Rural Electric Member Corporation, based in Morgan County.

While a number of the projects will bolster rural infrastructure, from riverfront redevelopment in Aurora to a community learning center in Greensburg, many will directly support ag-related ventures.

The Jennings County Growers, in partnership with Historic Hoosier Hills Resource Conservation and Development was granted \$200,000 to support a farmer-controlled system for cooperative marketing of locally grown livestock. The pro-

ject was designed to bolster the Jennings Growers' ongoing efforts to market locally grown commodities to institutions such as hospitals and schools within their region.

"I don't care where you live, there's always an advantage to selling locally," said Jennings Growers Vice President Bud Beesley, who is not intimidated by conventional food service distributors.

"No one can match your quality when you're selling to your neighbor on the other side of the road. Hopefully someday this will be all over the state."

In Madison, \$200,000 was awarded to the local Chamber of Commerce to sustain food production ventures and \$7,620 was

"What you do as individuals and organizations to improve the quality of life in your communities is as important as anything state government will do.

These awards celebrate the ideas that make Indiana's charming small towns and cities great."

-Lt. Governor Becky Skillman  
Secretary of Agriculture and  
Rural Development

allocated to rejuvenate the local farmers' market, while the Eastern Indiana Development District was given \$150,000 to fund a regional agribusiness development specialist.

Agricultural business development should also be bolstered by a \$90,400 award given to the value-added agriculture revolving loan fund managed by the Region III-A Economic Development District and Regional Planning Commission based in Noble County.

Agricultural education was supported for parties both within and outside of the ag sector. The Indiana Agriculture Leadership Institute was given \$64,500 to support a Rural Elected Official Leadership Development Program, the Indiana FFA was given \$100,000 to support growing rural Indiana through agricultural education and workforce development, and the Indiana Beef Cattle Association was given \$22,500 to support education of public officials through strategic partnerships.

Purdue's projects involve agriculture innovation and commercialization, the creation of an Indiana Beef Integrated Resource Management Program, the Latino Community Learning Center Project, and development and assessment of advanced life sciences teachers.

"We had every single community that received a grant here for the ceremony," said Annie Hernandez, public information officer for the Office of Rural Affairs, reflecting on recent festivities celebrating the grant distribution.

"We're excited to see the outcomes of all these different groups working together."

"It's nice to see different parts of Indiana are coming together and thinking outside county lines," said Sarah Yeager, program manager for the Indiana Rural Development Council.

The ceremony was "really our first public announcement" for the new Office of Rural Affairs, which was created in the same legislation that formed the Indiana Department of Agriculture, Yeager said. "It was an exciting time for rural Indiana."

The Office of Rural Affairs is currently at work on its strategic plan for the future, which it expects to present to the public "over the next few months," Yeager said.

Among the projects she expects to be involved with are a high-speed internet access planning and funding guide for rural communities and the management and distribution of \$37 million in Community Development Block Grants.

The Rural Development Grant winners were selected by an 16-member advisory board, which Lt. Gov. Becky Skillman sat on while she was still a state senator.

"What you do as individuals and organizations to improve the quality of life in your communities is as important as anything state government will do," Skillman said at the distribution ceremony.

"These awards celebrate the ideas that make Indiana's charming small towns and cities great." ❖

# Listening, Learning and Getting to Work

## Rural Entrepreneurship Task Force

IRDC has created a new task force to bring together organizations, institutions and agencies working in the emerging rural entrepreneurship arena.

The task force established four goals:

1. Determine how to attract venture capitalists and angel investors to rural projects.
2. Identify other funds, both public and private, available to assist rural entrepreneurs.
3. More effectively communicate the availability of and provide for

technical assistance to aspiring rural entrepreneurs.

4. Determine the structural issues, including infrastructure, which impede entrepreneurship and seek solutions to foster local growth.

The task force will be building partnerships to reduce duplication, maximize outreach and provide leadership to individuals and groups working to bring new economic opportunities and improve quality of life to rural communities.

The task force is chaired by Joe DeHaven, Community Bankers Association of

Indiana. Joining him from IRDC are Debbie Bishop-Trocha, Sam Cordes, Gail Gesell, Bob White, Senator Richard Young, Jr., Phil Anderson and Sarah Yeager. In addition, Matt Kinghorn and



Thayr Richey of the Southern Indiana Rural Development Project are also on the work group. Other partners will be added as the initiative evolves. ❖

## Creating an Indiana Rural Strategy Road Map

Rural communities are again being recognized for their invaluable contribution to Indiana and its quality of life. With the creation of the new Office of Rural Affairs (ORA), the IRDC has a new partner working to strengthen communities. This evolution calls for the development of a new, comprehensive rural strategy so that all players will be working from a common framework.

IRDC, ORA and many other organizations, businesses, agencies and institutions will be working to create a plan that will serve as the road map to help renew and revitalize

rural communities and make lasting contributions in the areas important to community development—workforce, education, health care, housing, infrastructure, agriculture business development, leadership, technology, land use and social/cultural.

The 35-member planning group will be hearing from national leaders to create a vision for



rural development. The group will identify broad areas of state need and then smaller work groups will be developing strategies and tactics to implement the plan. The process calls for meetings with numerous rural partner organizations and agencies for their input into the plan well before its completion. Lt. Governor Skillman will be conducting Listening Sessions this Fall for more input. The final plan will be out later this year.

For more information, contact:

Joe Pearson—ORA, 317.232.8895 or  
Phil Anderson—IRDC, 317.232.8776. ❖

## Community Visitation Program Sparks Innovation

Local leaders throughout Indiana are seeking ways to provide a spark to their community development efforts. The challenge often lies beyond the desire and often stalls when the “what if” questions step to the fore. IRDC has made a significant contribution to communities through its visitation program. The program is designed to bring experts who have unique ideas, access to technical assistance and the ability to challenge local communities to think beyond

their normal scope of understanding.

IRDC has facilitated the Community Visitation Program in seventeen areas of Indiana. IRDC will again be working with inquiring local leaders to determine what types of specialists need to be included in



the visit. The program will be up and running for the fourth quarter of 2005.

Communities interested in hosting a team of specialists for a day-and-a-half session need to contact the office today so teams can be assembled and meetings scheduled for local leaders and citizens. Contact either Phil Anderson, 317.232.8776 or Sarah Yeager, 317.234.3418 for more information. ❖



# New Office of Rural Affairs Coming Together

Viable rural communities are key to the state of Indiana's future. The 2005 session of the general assembly, passed legislation that named Lt. Governor Becky Skillman as the first ever Secretary of Agriculture and Rural Development for the state of Indiana. This same legislation created the Office of Rural Affairs as well as the Indiana State Department of Agriculture.

This is the first time in the history of Indiana that the state is making rural communities a major focus. Being from rural Lawrence County, Indiana, Lt. Governor Skillman is a champion for rural communities and has been thrilled with the support she and Governor Daniels have received from their legislative partners to make this a reality. The Office of Rural Affairs is led by its Director, Joe Pearson. Working alongside the Indiana Rural Development Council, these are the areas that currently make-up the Indiana Office of Rural Affairs.

## Community Development Block Grant

Rural communities have many pressing needs and sometimes need outside financial assistance. Indiana requests federal funds to help rural communities with a variety of projects including everything from sewer and water systems to community centers as well as fire trucks and stations. These funds allow communities to improve the quality of life and ensure the health and safety of their citizens. Since 1982, Indiana has received \$704 million for the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program and has assisted 537 different communities. In 2004, Indiana received \$37 million for the CDBG program.

If you would like to find out more about these grant opportunities or see if a local project is eligible for a grant, contact Greg Beumer ([gbeumer@ora.in.gov](mailto:gbeumer@ora.in.gov)) at 317.232.1703.

## Grants Management

To ensure the good stewardship of your state and federal tax dollars, once grants

have been awarded Grants Management provides oversight and assistance to communities. We want to get the biggest bang for your tax buck. Indiana has had a great track record at the national level of maximizing the monies we are awarded in order to serve the largest number of communities possible. If you want to find out more about our stewardship of grant monies, contact Beth Goeb ([bgoeb@ora.in.gov](mailto:bgoeb@ora.in.gov)) at 317.232.8334.

## High-Speed Communications

Most rural communities lack access to high speed communications. This is a must in today's economic society. High speed access is a critical part of today's quality of life. We must be able to connect hospitals and rural health clinics for medical services, and allow businesses to become more productive, efficient and competitive to reach the global market in a split second.

"With 75% of Indiana's counties designated as 'rural,' we must cater to the needs of these communities and offer any assistance possible to promote successful and sustainable communities."

*~Lt. Gov. Becky Skillman  
Secretary of Agriculture  
and Rural Development*

The Office of Rural Affairs is playing a key role in ensuring that rural communities across the state have the tools to effectively plan, finance and implement high speed projects. Rural communities with availability to high speed connectivity will have a more robust quality of life. To find out more about steps we are taking to ensure high speed access, contact Cris Fulford ([cfulford@ora.in.gov](mailto:cfulford@ora.in.gov)) at 317.234.1252.



## Indiana Main Street

Hoosiers love their local festivals, picnics on the lawn of town square and shopping in a local boutique for homegrown treasures. Downtowns and main streets are the heart of rural communities and are the strongest indicator of community prosperity and success. Indiana Main Street is a resource for Indiana communities that are inspired to revitalize and preserve their downtowns and main streets. If you want to find out more about the advantages to working on your main street, contact Ellen Harper ([eharper@ora.in.gov](mailto:eharper@ora.in.gov)) at 317.232.8912.

## Leadership Development

Indiana is blessed with a cadre of great rural community leaders. As we all know, few initiatives are successful without effective leaders and good planning. We want to help maximize rural community leaders' skills by providing access to tools, resources and models. Leaders must be cultivated and work collaboratively. Working with leadership organizations statewide, programming and resources will be available to all rural communities. For more information about statewide and local leadership resources and opportunities, contact Annie Hernandez ([ahernandez@ora.in.gov](mailto:ahernandez@ora.in.gov)) at 317.232.8909.

## Rural Health

A basic foundation of quality of life is health. Rural areas do not enjoy equal access and quality of health services found in

*(continued next page)*

urban areas. Access to health care specialists and services through tele-health and other technologies is imperative to high quality rural health care. The Office of Rural Affairs will help build partnerships to ensure rural Indiana has this important access. If you would like to discuss technical health assistance or health issues in your area, please contact Bob Sunman ([bsunman@isdh.state.in.us](mailto:bsunman@isdh.state.in.us)) at 317.233.7829.

### Strategic Development

While these are the specific areas which are currently staffed, the creation of a strategic plan will help drive the office's formation and priorities. Education, infrastructure, workforce, housing, social/cultural and other sectors of rural communities will need to be addressed. Through strategic alignment, the ORA and IRDC can work with other agencies, institutions and groups to effectively meet community needs. To learn more about ORA's strategic development planning, contact Steve Adams ([sadams@ora.in.gov](mailto:sadams@ora.in.gov)) at 317.232.8917.

"The Office of Rural Affairs will continue to evolve just as communities do," said Pearson. "We have both a responsibility and a unique opportunity to do something special for Indiana's rural communities through this new office." ❖

## ICDC Creating a Cooperative Enterprise Network

The Indiana Cooperative Development Center, Inc. (ICDC) is starting a certification program for the new Cooperative Enterprise Network (CEN). The CEN will consist of professionals who are doing economic development work in Indiana and want to enhance their skills to include cooperative development. The project is a partnership between ICDC, Purdue University, Indiana SBDC and USDA Rural Development.

ICDC is now accepting nominations for participants in the first certification program training to be held October 5-6, 2005. The training will comprehensively cover the cooperative development process and will be funded entirely by the Indiana Cooperative Development Center. Enrollment is limited so please respond as quickly as possible.

The CEN program is open to anyone currently working in economic development in Indiana and is interested in learning new skills for future work with collaborative groups looking to form business partnerships. Candidate **must** be available to work on projects within their area of expertise or geographical region, complete the

CEN certification program and become a certified NxLevel instructor (or have comparable training). The candidate must also commit to participation in network's activities. Employers must also support activity in the network.

Application is by nomination and submissions must be received no later than August 12, 2005.

To learn what information is needed for the nomination, please contact the Indiana Cooperative Development Center. Debora Conley is the Center's Executive Director, 317.232.8771 ([dconley@isda.in.gov](mailto:dconley@isda.in.gov)) and Chad Martin is the Business Development Specialist, 317.234.5263 ([cmartin@isd.in.gov](mailto:cmartin@isd.in.gov)).



## SHOW ME THE MONEY!

In May and June, the Office of Rural Affairs awarded over \$20 million in Community Development Block Grants, Rural Development Action Grants and Rural Regional Partner Grants.

## Indiana Rural Development Conference Planned

Each year the Indiana Rural Development Council (IRDC) has hosted an annual state-wide conference. For 2005, the IRDC and the Indiana Association of Regional Councils (IARC) are teaming up to present the Indiana Rural Development Conference.

The conference will again be held in Lebanon, Indiana at the Quality Inn & Suites Hotel (formerly Ramada). The date(s) for

the 2005 conference will be December 8 or December 9, but has not yet been finalized.

"This is a natural partnership because the scope of the IRDC closely matches that of the regional councils," said Phil Anderson, IRDC Executive Director. "By working together we hope to provide a refreshing and insightful dialogue on rural issues and opportunities," said Jill Saegesser, IARC

President. Keep watching IRDC's website for conference program details and registration information. ❖



# IRDC Governing Board

## **FOR PROFIT SECTOR:**

Joe DeHaven, Community Bankers  
Association of Indiana  
James Rice, Hannum, Wagle & Cline  
Kenneth Birk, VS Engineering  
Matt Wirth (A), Bonar Group

## **NON-PROFIT SECTOR:**

Nancy Kinder, Eastern Indiana  
Development District  
Beth Archer, Indiana Agricultural  
Leadership Institute  
Kent Yeager, Indiana Farm Bureau, Inc.  
DeeDee Sigler (A), Indiana Association of  
Soil & Water Conservation Districts

## **FEDERAL SECTOR:**

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Rural Development  
William Shaw, US Department of Housing  
and Urban Development  
Paul Neumann, USDA Rural Development  
Gail Gesell (A), US Small Business  
Administration

## **STATE SECTOR:**

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(represented by Anne Hazlett)  
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## **YOUTH LEADERS:**

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## **BOARD LIAISONS:**

Sam Cordes, Purdue Cooperative  
Extension Service  
Debbie Bishop-Trocha, Indiana Small  
Business Development Centers  
Joe Pearson, Indiana Office of Rural Affairs

## **LEGISLATIVE APPOINTMENTS:**

Robert Jackman, Indiana State Senator  
Richard Young, Indiana State Senator  
William Friend, Indiana State Representative  
Phil Pflum, Indiana State Representative  
Doran Moreland,  
U.S. Senator Evan Bayh's Office  
Lane A. Ralph,  
U.S. Senator Richard Lugar's Office  
Brandt Hershman,  
Congressman Steve Buyer's Office

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Indiana Rural Development Council  
Newsletter

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Visit us On-line

[www.in.gov/irdc](http://www.in.gov/irdc)

[www.in.gov/ora](http://www.in.gov/ora)



*The Indiana Rural Development Council is a partnership of local, state, federal, profit and not-for-profit stakeholders that supports Indiana communities. The IRDC's purpose is to coordinate efforts of citizens and governments to meet the economic and social needs of rural Indiana.*

*IRDC believes:*

- *Rural communities will need to be both resilient and sustainable to be successful in the 21st century.*
- *Rural development should be inclusive, not exclusive.*
- *Resource investment decisions must be based on sound research and development principles.*